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BILLEDON COPLOW,

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P O E M.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, A. D. 1804.

"Quæque ipse miserrima vidi
"Et quorum pars magna fui."—VIRG.

MONTREAL:

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1809,

Cut

BILLESDON COPLOW,

ON Monday the 24th of February, 1800, Mr. Meynell's hounds met at Billesdon Coplow; the day was remarkably unpromising, the wind being uncommonly high and at N. E. nevertheless, the instant the hounds were thrown into cover, they unkennelled and went away close at his brush, and after a run of two hours and twenty three minutes, which, with the exception of a check of two minutes, consisted of the hardest running ever known in Leicestershire; and in the course of which all the horses, with the exception of five or six, were completely done, and many actually left dead in the field. They ran to ground at Enderby warren, have crossed eight and twenty miles of the severest country in England, in the above mentioned time of two hours and twenty three minutes.

MELTON, FEBRUARY 24, 1808.

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BILLESDON COPLOW, FEB. 24, 1800.

WITH the wind at north-east forbiddingly keen,
 The Coplow at Billesdon, ne'er witnessed I ween
 Two hundred such horses and men at a burst,
 All determined to ride, each resolved to be first :
 But to get a good start, over eager and zealous,
 Two thirds at the least of these very fine fellows
 So crowded, and hustled, and jostled, and crossed,
 That they rode the wrong way, and at starting were
 lost,

In spite of the unpromising state of the weather
 Away broke the Fox and the hounds close together ;
 A burst up to Tilton so brilliantly ran,
 Was scarce ever seen in the mem'ry of man.
 What hounds carried scent or which led the way,
 Your bard, to their names a stranger, can't say,
 Tho' their names had he known he is free to confess
 His horse couldn't shew him at such a death pace.
 Villiers, Cholmondeley, and Forester made such
 sharp play,

Not omitting Germain, never seen till to day ;
 Had you judged of these four by the trim of their pace
 At Bilury you'd thought they'd been riding a race.
 But these hounds with a scent how they dash and
 they fling,

To o'er-ride them is quite the impossible thing ;
 Disdaining to hang in the wood thro' he raced,
 And the open for Sheffington gallantly faced ;
 Where headed and foiled his first point he forsook
 And merrily led them a dance o'er the brook.
 Passed Gally and Norton, Great Stretton and Small,
 Right onward still sweeping to old Skelton Hall,
 Where two minutes check served to shew at one ken
 The extent of the havoc 'midst horses and men.

Such sighing, such sobbing, such trotting, such walking,

Such reeling, such halting, of fences such baulking,
Such a smoke in the gaps, such comparing of notes,
Such quizzing each other's daubed breeches and coats.
Here a man walked on foot, who his horse had half killed,

There you met with a steed who his rider had spilled :
In short such Dilemmas, such scrapes, such distress,
One fox ne'er occasioned, the knowing confess ;
But alas! the dilemmas had scarcely began,
On for Wrigston and Ayleston he resolute ran,
Where a few of the stoutest now slackened and panted,

And many were seen irretrievably planted. (1)—
The high road to Liecester the scoundrel then crost,
As Tell Tale (2) and Beaufremont (3) found to their cost.

And Villiers esteemed it a serious bore
That no longer could Shuttlecock (4) fly as before ;
Even Joe Miller's (5) spirit for fun was so broke,
That he ceased to consider the run as a joke ;
Then streaming away o'er the river he dashed,
Germain close at hand, off the bank Melon (6) dashed ;
Why the dun proved so stout in a scamper so wild,
Till now he had only been rode by a child: (7)
After him plunged Joe Miller with Musters' (8) so slim,
Who twice sunk and nearly paid dear for his whim,
Not reflecting that all water melons must swim.

1 Planted means when a horse is so completely tired as to be unable to extricate himself out of heavy ploughed ground, where he sticks till he is hauled out by main force.

2 Tell Tale, Mr. Forester's horse.

3 Beaufremont, Mr. Maddox's horse.

4 Shuttlecock, Lord Villiers' horse.

5 Joe Miller, Mr. Musters' horse.

6 Melon, the name of Mr. Germain's horse.

7 Mr. Child.

8 Mr. Musters.

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called

Well-soused by their dips on they brushed o'er the
bottom,

With liquor on board enough to besot 'em ;
But the villain no longer at all at a loss,
Stretched away like a devil for Enderby Gorse,
Where meeting with many a brother and couzen,
Who knew how to dance a good hays in the Furzen :
Jack Raven (9) at length coming up on a hack
Which a farmer had lent him, whipt of the game
pack,

Running sulky old Loadstone (10) the stream
woud'nt swim,

No longer sport proving a magnet for him ;
Of mistakes and mishaps and what each man befel,
Would the muse could with justice poetical tell.
Bob Grosvenor on Plush (11) tho' determined to ride,
Lost at first a good start and was soon set aside,
Tho' he charged hill and dale not to lose this rare
chase,

On velvet Plush could not get footing, alas !
To Tilton sailed bravely Sir Wheeler O'Cuff, (12)
Where neglecting thro' hurry to keep a good luff ;
To leeward he drifts, how provoking a case,
And was forced tho' reluctant to give up the chase.
As making his way to the pack's not his fort,
Sir Lawly (13) as usual lost half the sport.
But then the professed philosophical creed,
That " All's for the best " of Master Candid,
If not comfort, Sir R—— reconcile may at least,
For on this supposition his sport is the best.
Orly Hunter (14) who seemed to be hunting his fate,
Got falls to the tune of no fewer than eight.

9 Jack Raven, the name of the huntsman.

10 Loadstone, the huntsman's horse.

11 Plush, Mr. Grosvenor's horse.

12 Sir Wheeler Cuff, who being an Irishman, is called by the Meltonians, O'Cuff.

13 Sir Robt. Lawly, not unusually in the brief dialect of Melton, called Sir Lawly.

14 Mr. Orly, hunter.

Bason's king (15) upon Glimpse sadly out of condition,

Pulled up to avoid of being tired, the suspicion :
He acted quite right for Og very soon found,
His best had he done he'd have ne'er seen a hound.
Charles Meynell who lay very well with the hounds,
Till at Skelton he nearly arrived at the bounds,
Now discovered that Waggoner (16) rather wou'd creep

Than exert his great prowess in taking a leap ;
But when crossing the turnpike he read " Put on here,"

'Twas enough to make any one bluster and swear, (17)
The Waggoner feeling familiar the road,
Was resolved not to quit it—so stock still he stood.
'Tis money they say makes the mare to go kind,
The proverb has vouched for this, time out of mind :
But tho' of this truth you admit the full force,
It may not hold good of every horse,
If it did, Charles Ellis need not hustle and hug,
By name, not by nature, his favorite Slug ; (18)
Yet Slug as he is the whole of this chase,
Charles ne'er could have seen had he gone a snail's pace.

Old Gradus (19) whose fretting and fuming at first,
Disqualifies strangely for such a light burst,
E'er to Tilton arrived, ceased to pull and to crave,
And tho' foolish at Skelton he stepped a " Pas grave"

15 Mr. Oglander, who according to the above mentioned dialect, goes by the familiar name of Og.

16 Waggoner, the name of Mr. Charles Meynell's horse.

17 Mr. C. Meynell had threatened never again to attempt following the hounds from Billesdon, as no horse could carry his weight up to them in that part of the country.

Yet prithee dear Charles why rash vows will you make,

Thy leave of old Billesdon to finally take,

Since from Segshill (*) for instance or perhaps Melton Spinny,

If they go a good pace you are beat for a guinea.

* Segshill, a very different part of the country.

18 Slug, the name of Mr. C. Ellis' horse.

19 Gradus, the name of Mr. George Ellis' horse.

Where in turning him over a cramp kind of a place,
 He overturned George, whom he threw on his face;
 And on foot to walk home it had sure been his fate,
 But that soon he was caught and tied up to a gate.
 Near Wrigston occurred a most singular joke,
 Captain Millar (20) averred that his leg he had broke,
 And bemoaned in most piteous expressions how hard
 By so cruel a fracture to have his sport marred.
 In quizzing his friends he felt little remorse,
 To finesse the complete doing up of his horse,
 Had he told a long story of losing a shoe,
 Or of laming his horse he very well knew:
 That the *Leicestershire Creed* out this Truism Worms,
 Lost shoes and dead beat are synonymous terms, (21)
 So a horse must here learn whatever he does,
 To die game as at Tyburn, and die in his shoes.
 Maynard's lord (22) who detests competition & strife,
 As well in the chase as in conjugal life,
 Than whom nobody harder has rode in his time:
 But to crane (23) now and then he thinks it no crime,
 That he bet some crack riders most fairly may crow;
 For he lived to the end tho' he scarcely knows how,
 With snaffle and martingale kept in the rear,
 His horse's mouth half open up to his ear.
 Mr. Wardle who threatened great things (24) over
 night,
 Beyond Stretton was left in a most piteous plight,
 Too lean to be pressed yet egged on by compulsion,
 No wonder his nag tumbled into convulsion—

20 Capt. Millar of the Blues.

21 Indeed so implicit is this article of Meltonian belief, that many a horse, in addition to the misfortune of breaking his hoof from losing a shoe, has laboured likewise under the aforesaid unavoidable imputation to his everlasting disgrace.

22 Lord Maynard.

23 Crane—This word derives its origin from the necessary extension of neck which such sportsmen must make use of who dare to incur the reproach of venturing to look before they leap.

24 Mr. Wardle is said to have threatened over night, that he would beat the whole field next day.

Ah! had he but lost a fore shoe or fell lame,
 'Twould only his sport have curtailed, not his fame.
 Lorraine (25) than whom no one his game plays
 more safe,
 Who the last than the first prefers seeing by half,
 What with necking (26) and keeping a constant look
 out,
 Every turn of the scent surely turned to account.
 The wonderful pluck of his horse surprized some,
 But he knew they were making point blank for his
 home,
 "Short home" to be brought we all should de-
 sire,
 Could we manage the stick like the Enderby squire.
 Wild Shelly (27) at starting all ears and all eyes,
 Who to get a good start all experiments tries,
 Yet contrived it so ill as to throw out poor Gipse (28)
 And he rattled along as if he were tipsy.
 To catch them again, but tho' famous for speed
 He never could touch (29) them much less get the
 lead; (30)
 So disheartened, (31) disgaunted and beat home he
 swings,
 Not much unlike a fiddle when hung upon strings.

25 Lorraine Smith, Esq. of Enderby House, where the hounds run to ground.

26 Necking, the prolongation of the neck, which is necessary for those sportsmen who, by keeping a good look out to the hounds, judge from the turns of the scent which way they are likely to point, thence making all the short cuts in their power, by which means they are nine times out of ten thrown out, and for which express purpose more than sport, some are silly enough to suppose he hunts, and which tho' he did actually succeed in some seasons ago, he probably will never do again, having threatened it frequently since with as little success.

27 Sir John Shelly. 28 Gipse, Sir John's mare.

29 Touch, meaning according to the Melton dialect, overtake.

30 Get a lead, by which it is understood securing the privilege of breaking your neck first, and when you fall, being rode over by a hundred & ninety-nine of the best fellows on earth to a dead certainty.

31 Nor can that astonish any one when it is considered what an inestimable privilege he has lost.

An H H (32) who in Leicestershire never had been,
So of course such a Tickler (33) could never have seen,
Just to see them throw off on a raw (34) horse was
mounted,

Who a hound had ne'er seen or a fence had confronted;
But they found in such style (35) and went off at
such score, (36)

That he could not resist the attempt to see more—
So with scrambling (37) and dashing (38) and one
rattling fall, (39)

He saw all the fun up to Skelton's White-hall:
There they anchored in plight not a little distressing,
The horse being raw he of course got a dressing.
That wonderful mare of Vanneck's who till now,
By no chance ever tired (40) was taken in tow,
And what's worse, she gave him such a devilish jog,
In the face with her head, plunging out of a bog,

32 It is not quite clear whether these initials are meant to apply to a Hampshire hog or the Hampshire hunt; if the hog, it does not quite appear that he saved his bacon.

33 Tickler (Meltonied) a run so severe that there is no laughing at it.

34 Raw (*ibid*) a horse who knew nothing of the business he was going about, or wished to know.

35 Style means the best possible means of doing any thing; as for instance, when a man rides his horse full speed at a double post and rails with a squire trap on the other side, which is a ditch of about two yards wide cut on purpose to break gentlemen's necks—He is then reckoned at Melton, to have rode at it in style, especially if he is caught in the said squire trap.

36 Score means that kind of pace which perhaps neither you nor your horse ever went before, and if you have not more luck than falls to the share of every experiment of the kind, 'tis ten to one but he falls before he can (what they call) get on his legs, in which case you may rest perfectly satisfied that he must roll over you, two or three times at least, before he can stop himself.

37 Scrambling means when a horse does not leave above three of his legs behind him and saves himself by pitching on his head.

38 Dashing means when a man charges a fence, which no other word can express so fully; on the other side of which it is impossible to guess what mischief awaits him, but where his getting a fall is reduced as nearly as possible to a moral certainty.

39 Rattling Fall—Q: E: D.

40 Which if other proofs were wanting, ascertained beyond any thing else the severity of this chase.

That with eye black as ink, or as Edward's famed prince,

Half blind has he been and quite deaf ever since :

But let not that mortify thee shack a back (41)

She only was blown (42) and came home a rare hack.

Then Craven (43) too stopped whose misfortune, not fault,

His mare unaccountably vexed with string halt, (44)

And when she had ceased this spasmodic to prance,

Her mouth 'gan to twitch with St. Vitus' dance. (45)

But who shall describe the fate of Rose Price, (46)

Whose favourite gelding conveyed him so nice,

Thro' thick and thro' thin that he vowed and protested,

No money should part them as long as life lasted : (47)

But the pace that affected which money could not, (48)

For to part and in death was there no distant lot,

In a fatal blind ditch Karlo Khan's (49) powers failed,

When lancet (50) nor laudanum (51) neither availed.

41 A familiar appellation borrowed from Blue Beard, and bestowed by his friends at Melton on Mr. Vanneck, than which nothing more thoroughly prove the estimation in which he is held there, since none but good fellows are ever esteemed, according to the Meltonian principles, worthy of a nick-name.

42 Which was his own observation, the merit of which I should scorn to assume, but for the truth of which (at least the latter assertion) I can vouch, as I perfectly agree with him that I never saw a more complete hack, tho' he is pleased to call her a hunter.

43 Honble. Berkely Craven.

44 & 45 Two nervous affections in every sense of the word, very distressing, especially to a bye-stander who cannot command his risible faculty's on the occasion.

46 A gentleman of whom it has been erroneously said, that he never returned from hunting without laming or knocking up his horse.

47 At the cover side, this horse had been particularly admired, and upwards of six hundred guineas offered for him.

48 Which is a complete answer to that important question so vauntingly asked by a favorite poet, when he exclaiming in language indeed somewhat bold, "Pray what can do that which money cannot."

49 The name of poor Mr. Price's horse.

50 & 51 Two excellent restoratives, when the patient is not too far gone—when he is (as in the present case), inimitable soporifics.

More care (52) of a horse than he took could no man,
 He'd more straw than would serve any lying-in woman,
 Still he died, yet just how as nobody knows,
 It may truly be said he died under the rose.
 At the death of poor Khan Melton (53) feels such
 remorse,

That they've christened the ditch the vale of white
 horse.

Thus ended a chace, which for distance and speed,
 Its fellow we never have heard of or read ;
 What a good country hunter (54) may here prove a
brute,

Every species of ground every horse does not suit ;
 And unless for all sorts of strange fences prepared,
 A man and his horse are sure to be scared.
 This variety gives constant life to the chace,
 But as Forrester (55) says " Sir, what kills is the
 pace." (56)

52 Indeed it is only to be lamented that Mr. Price had not taken rather more care of him a little earlier in the day, which probably would have abated the necessity of this accouchement.

53 Which redounds highly to the credit and sympathy of the Melton gentlemen, and completely refutes every ill natured but groundless supposition that this sensibility will ever suffer them to make a joke of any heavy loss a gentleman may sustain, especially if the gent. likewise happens to be heavy himself, which of course, doubtles the weight of the misfortune.

54 As every country gentleman may not comprehend the force of this expression, he ought to know that the Meltonians hold every horse in thorough contempt who cannot " Go along a strapping pace."—" Stay at that pace."—" Skim, ridge and furrow."—" Catch his horse."—" Top off light rails."—" Come well into the next field."—" Charge an ox fence."—" Go in and out clever."—" Face a breach."—" Swish at a rasper."—And in short do all that kind of thing which is so plain & intelligible, that it is impossible to mistake its meaning. That horse is held in the same contempt in Leicester-shire as a coxcomb holds a country bumpkin. In vulgar countries, i. e. all others where these accomplishments are not indispensable, he may be a hunter.

55 Cecil Forrester, Esq. one of the boldest and best riders in England : a gentleman who practically explains all the above mentioned accomplishments, to the great edification of young horses, and the no less astonishment of weak minds.

56 A favorite maxim of Mr. Forrester, of the truth of which he

In most other countries they boast of their breed,
 For carrying at times such a beautiful head : (56)
 But these hounds to carry a head cannot fail,
 And constantly too, for by George there's no tail. (57)
 Talk of horses, and hounds, and of system in kennel,
 Give me Leceistershire nags and the hounds of old
 Meynell.

seldom loses an opportunity of endeavoring to make his friends
thoroughly sensible.

56 & 57 As heads and tails are not to be understood in the
 common acceptation of the words; and as all ladies are not sports-
 women enough to be aware that they have no reference to the human
 head and tail—they should know that when you can cover the hounds
 with a sheet (which any true sportsman will explain to them more
 particularly), they are then said to carry a good head. When on
 the contrary they follow their leader in a line, like a flock of wild
 fowl, they are then said to tail.

